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FOUR ESSAYS
ON
THEOLOGICAL SUBJECTS,
BY
EDWARD ASH, M.D.

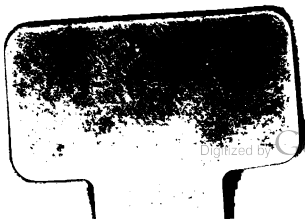
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PREFACE.

In applying the word *Essay* to the contents of this little volume, I use it in its original rather than in its present ordinary sense. These Essays are not Treatises, but simply attempts to contribute something towards a true understanding of the subjects of which they speak.

The great intrinsic importance of the subject of the first two Essays, together with the nature of the controversies respecting them which have of late so largely occupied the church's attention, makes any explanation of their introduction here altogether needless. The subject of the third Essay has long occupied my thoughts ; and I had not only designed, from the first, to give it a place in this volume, but had made considerable progress with the Essay itself before I learnt that a fellow-member of the christian community with which I am more immediately connected was preparing a work on the same subject. My reason for introducing that of the fourth Essay has been, in part, the prominence which has been given to a particular branch of it in the late controversies ; and in part, the comparatively

small amount of attention which the subject as a whole seems generally to obtain even among thoughtful christians.

The first Essay will be found to include only one of the various lines of argument by which the authority and inspiration of the holy scriptures may be sustained. In the three other Essays I have sought to deduce the teaching of scripture, in relation to their several subjects, from a careful examination of its language; one, however, rather directed to the gathering of its general meaning, than consisting in minute textual analysis or verbal criticism. In each of the Essays I have referred, for purposes of argument and illustration, to many passages of scripture without quoting them. I am well aware that careless or hasty readers will not take the trouble to consult the passages themselves, and will thus be unable to appreciate their bearing upon the matter in hand. They however who take a real interest in the several subjects here discussed, and are anxious to learn what the scriptures teach concerning them, will not grudge this trouble, and will be amply recompensed for it by the necessary tendency of such a course to make their ultimate conclusions rest, not on their own preconceived ideas, nor on the opinions of other men, but on the teaching of the Spirit of truth himself.

ESSAY I.

ON THE AUTHORITY AND INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

As the authority and inspiration of the holy scriptures rest on various kinds of evidence, so they may be sustained by different lines of argument. The following is one which seems entitled to more prominence than has been commonly given to it. It will be seen to assume, as its foundation, the divine character and mission of Christ.

If we admit the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament Scriptures, and ascribe to them only as much truthfulness and accuracy of statement as we do to multitudes of other books, we must necessarily accept the account which they give of the teaching of our Lord and his Apostles as substantially accurate and reliable. Now in that teaching we continually find certain conditions spoken of in the most express terms as absolutely indispensable to men's being in a state of acceptance and friendship with God in the present life, and to their enjoying happiness and escaping misery in that which is to come.* But if such conditions really exist, it would seem to be an inevitable conclusion that God should, in some way or other, have

* The question, how far what is here said applies to those who are ignorant of God's revealed truth, will be found considered in the Fourth Essay.

furnished us with a perfectly authentic and reliable statement of them : and since it is certain that he has not done so in any other way, there is evidently a very strong presumption, arising out of the necessity of the case, in favour of the perfect truth and consequent authority of the New Testament representation of them.

Again, when we consider that what may thus, for brevity sake, be termed the conditions of men's salvation, as made known under the new covenant dispensation, not only directly involve, but are altogether founded upon the being, attributes, purposes, and ways of God, the relation in which man stands to him, and the provision which he has made for men's restoration and salvation, we further see a no less cogent reason, arising in like manner out of the necessity of the case, for concluding that the New Testament account of these things also must be perfectly authentic and reliable.

The argument, as thus far pursued, will be found to embrace all that portion of the contents of the New Testament which relates to what we are accustomed distinctively to term "divine truth." But that truth is constantly represented as standing in close and inseparable connexion with certain matters of fact and history, relating especially to Christ and his Apostles. There must needs then be the same antecedent reason for regarding the accounts of these also as unquestionably true.

But to whatever extent the foregoing argument may embrace the contents of the New Testament, it cannot be said to embrace them all. Much still remains in regard to which the question has to be answered, Is it also perfectly reliable? In other words, Are the whole contents of the volume to be accounted true and authoritative, or is

there some portion of them which cannot be so accounted ? Let us look at this question, first as one of probability, and then as one of fact.

If the preceding argument be sound, not only will it necessarily follow that God must have specially appointed these scriptures to be an authoritative record of the several kinds of truth of which we have now been speaking, but also that he must have employed special and supernatural means to render them such ; since the experience of mankind altogether forbids the supposition of their contents possessing the attributes of truth and accuracy to the extent here assumed, without some interposition of this kind. Now if he who is emphatically "a God of truth" has seen meet thus largely and closely to identify himself (so to speak) with these writings, is it likely that he should have suffered mistake or error of any kind to find admission into them ? Or can we wonder that there should be, in most devout minds, an instinctive repugnance to admit such an idea ?

Again, looking more immediately at these scriptures considered in themselves, assuming their purpose and character to be those just now described, bearing in mind the momentous and sacred nature of the truths of which they were especially appointed to be the depository, and considering how they thus stand distinguished by a broad and definite line of separation from all other writings (the Old Testament Scriptures only excepted), it would surely seem highly improbable that mistake or error of any kind should have been allowed to form part of their contents.

It will be seen that both the foregoing grounds of improbability are irrespective of the consideration (so

manifestly true) that, if error be really mingled with truth in these scriptures, we have no certain means of distinguishing the one from the other. But that consideration plainly suggests a further and very strong ground of the same kind ; since such a state of things could hardly fail to become a source of doubt and perplexity to persons of devout and believing minds, while to the cavilling and unbelieving it would inevitably furnish a dangerous pretext for questioning and rejecting the testimony of scripture whenever it might seem to them improbable or incredible. Nor would these evils be obviated in either case by assuming what is erroneous or mistaken in the contents of the volume to be wholly confined to immaterial points ; since the former class of readers would still be involved in the difficulty of determining what they ought or ought not to account immaterial ; while, as regards the latter, experience but too plainly shows how fearfully wide a latitude such minds are disposed to allow themselves in this matter.

So much for the question before us regarded as one of probability. Let us now look at it as one of fact. Is there then any such evidence of the existence of error or mistake in the New Testament Scriptures as ought to be deemed conclusive in the face of these strong antecedent reasons for its improbability ? Whatever evidence has been offered that can be regarded as really worthy of notice, consists in seemingly discordant or contradictory statements in relation to matters of fact, found either in different parts of the New Testament, or in comparing certain of its passages with others in the Old Testament. By far the greater number of what might seem at first sight to be cases of this kind are found on examination to admit of a perfectly satis-

factory explanation. A very few however remain, of which this cannot justly be affirmed; and in regard to these, two alternative courses are open to us. One, that of either ascribing them to corruptions of the original text hitherto undiscovered, or assuming that a fuller acquaintance with all the circumstances of the several cases would enable us satisfactorily to explain them. The other, that of admitting them as evidences of the real existence of mistake or error.

Now considering, first, what we have just seen of the great antecedent improbability of such existence; secondly, the very small number of unexplained cases of seeming discordance in relation to matters of fact, and the entire absence of any such having relation to doctrine, in a volume the contents of which afford such multiplied opportunities for both; thirdly, the fact that some of the former kind, which once seemed inexplicable, are now found to admit of explanation; fourthly, that some of the still unexplained cases (e.g. Luke xviii. 35, compared with Matt. xx. 29, and Mark x. 46) are of such a nature as to make it highly probable that a full knowledge of all their circumstances would enable us to explain them; fifthly, that in others (as Acts vii. 16) the idea of real mistake seems altogether precluded by their known circumstances; and, sixthly, that we cannot be sure of the perfect accuracy of the text;—considering all this, it is surely far more reasonable to adopt the former alternative than the latter. And a further reason for doing so is plainly suggested by the consideration that, if we admit the actual existence of mistake or error even in a single case of this kind, we thereby admit its possible existence in an indefinite number of others where we have not the means which comparison affords for detecting it.

Thus much for the authority of the New Testament Scriptures. Let us now turn to those of the Old Testament. Here, in addition to the antecedent improbability of mistake or error, (which of course equally applies to the whole volume, supposing it to be to any extent a divinely appointed and provided record of God's truth,) we find a further and very strong argument against the idea of their existence in the manner in which our Lord and his Apostles were accustomed to refer to the Old Testament Scriptures, constantly applying to them the distinctive and significant appellation of *the Scripture*; often expressly ascribing their language to God himself or to the Holy Spirit (see e.g. Matt. xxii. 43, Luke i. 70, Acts i. 16, iii. 18, iv. 25, xxviii. 25, 2 Tim. iii. 16, Heb. i. 1, iii. 7, x. 15, 1 Peter i. 11, and 2 Peter i. 21); always referring to their statements, whether of fact or of doctrine, as if they were indisputably true (see e.g. Luke xxiv. 44, and John x. 35); and never saying any thing that could suggest the idea of exception or limitation to their truth. Such a manner of treating them plainly implies that they who employed it must have regarded their contents as not only in part, but altogether true and reliable. These two grounds then fully justify the same conclusion respecting the Old Testament as that to which we arrived in relation to the New; namely, that if there are passages in it which seem contradictory, or which in any other way involve difficulties not yet explained, it is far more reasonable to suppose there must be some undiscovered solution of them, than to regard them as evidences of actual error or mistake on the part of the writers.

There would thus seem to be abundant reason, furnished

by the particular line of argument which has been here pursued, and independently of all others, to justify the estimate which the great mass of earnest christians form of the holy scriptures, as being emphatically and throughout "scriptures of truth." Nor can it be at all conceded, though it is often asserted or insinuated, that this estimate is mere matter of tradition. Far from being so, it unquestionably arises, to a very large extent, from an instinctive feeling that such a book as they know the Bible to be, every where bearing the most indubitable marks of a divine origin, must be, in the fullest sense, a book of truth, and not a mere mixture of truth and error. Nor can it be deemed a slight presumption in favour of the soundness of this view, that, as a general rule, in proportion to men's reverence for and trust in God and Christ, is also their reverence for the sacred volume, and their confidence in the truth of its contents.

The reasons which influence men to take low or qualified views of the truth and reliableness of the holy scriptures, are no doubt various. Still, considering the very large extent to which the disposition to question and impugn their authority is found to be associated with avowed repugnance to some of those truths which christians in general regard as plainly taught in them, it seems impossible not to conclude that the one must be, however in some cases unconsciously, in no small degree the result of the other. Again, as regards the repugnance just alluded to, nothing can be more evident than that there is at the present time a strong and wide-spread disposition among professing christians to be their own teachers in divine things; relying on their intuition or consciousness

or whatever else they may term the dictates of their own reason and judgment, instead of reverently and humbly submitting themselves to the teaching of God's Spirit as made to us through the scriptures. And here it is important to note how predominantly negative the teaching of this class of persons commonly is; how much more it consists in efforts to disprove and overthrow generally received articles of faith, than in attempts to offer anything positive or definite in their room. This is strikingly exemplified in their manner of treating the subject before us: for while they are sufficiently explicit in rejecting the absolute and universal truth and authority of the scriptures, they singularly fail in giving any distinct idea of the extent to which they regard these attributes as really belonging to them.

When the attribute of truth is claimed, as in the present argument, for the whole contents of the sacred volume, of course no more is meant than that whatever the several writers relate as matter of fact (including their reports of discourses, conversations, &c.,) is worthy of implicit belief; and that whatever they themselves deliver, or report others of God's specially authorized and inspired servants to have delivered, in the character of divine truth, is to be received as really such. In general the line of separation here indicated between that which is and that which is not to be accounted authoritative and reliable, founded on the distinction between inspired and uninspired persons, is easily discoverable; though there are undoubtedly some parts of scripture (e.g. in the book of Job) as to which there may be reasonable question whether they are of the one kind or the other.

Another point to be noted is, that the question of the truth and authority of the holy scriptures is in no degree involved in that of the authorship of the several books, any further than such authorship is expressly affirmed in them. Neither is it in any way concerned in another question which has been of late prominently brought forward by the impugnors of their authority,—that of the sources from whence the sacred writers derived their knowledge of the things of which they speak. It is simply and solely the question which we have now been considering,—whether that which those writers teach or report as truth is really such.

As regards the doubtful point just now referred to, the yet unexplained seeming discrepancies before spoken of, and whatever other difficulties the scriptures may present, it is evident that, in common with the difficulties and seeming anomalies which we encounter in contemplating the works and ways of God, they are fitted, and we may therefore well believe were intended, to serve an important purpose as both a means of moral discipline and a test of moral character: of the one, by exercising the children of God in humility and trust; of the other, by making manifest the existence of these graces, or detecting the pride and unbelief which are their opposites.

It was noted at an early stage of the foregoing argument that the kind of authority there claimed for the holy scriptures necessarily implies the idea of a divine and supernatural interposition in their preparation; since, by reason of human infirmity, nothing short of such an interposition could have secured the perfect truth of their

contents. Of course therefore, if this attribute belongs to all their contents, the interposition must also, in some way or other, have extended to them all. We say, in some way or other; for a moment's consideration of the widely different character of those contents will at once suggest the idea of a corresponding difference in the particular nature of the divine interposition exercised in relation to them; for example, between the direct revelation of divine truth to the mind of a speaker and writer, and such a special help and grace of the Holy Spirit as should secure both his introducing such matter and such only as that Spirit saw fit, and also his so introducing them as that all his statements (from whatever source he might derive information) should possess the attribute of perfect truth. (Note our Lord's promise to his disciples in John xiv. 26.)

As to the precise nature of the Spirit's operation upon the mind in any case whatever, it is evident that we neither can nor need to know anything: and the same may be said of the question whether the writers themselves were or were not uniformly conscious of the special divine influence under which they wrote. All that we are concerned to know is, that it was of such a nature as to give their writings that character of truth and authority which has been here ascribed to them.

By the general consent of the church the word *inspiration* is used to denote this influence; and its use is at once justified by etymological fitness and by apostolic example. (See 2 Tim. iii. 16.) If the view which has been here taken of the subject be correct, the word, as thus applied, (whether used alone or with the added

epithet *plenary*.) must of course be understood in a sense corresponding with it; one which, however qualified by the considerations above noted, implies a divine interposition and influence of a nature and to an extent so immeasurably beyond what can be claimed for any other writings, as to constitute a broad definite and every way impassable line of separation between them and the holy scriptures.

Allusion has already been made to the large use which the sacred writers (we are now speaking more particularly of the New Testament) avowedly make of natural sources of information. It is now to be further noted that in all which they wrote, from whatever source their information might be derived, whether a natural or a supernatural one, we continually meet with indications of their distinctive mental characters, and of their peculiar habits of thought feeling and expression. In this fact we have plain evidence of what is commonly and not unfitly termed a *human element* in the holy scriptures; and it needs but little consideration to perceive how indispensable the presence of such an element must be to their practical value and use. Its presence moreover plainly shows that, whatever may have been the particular nature of the divine influence under which they were written, the circumstances of the writers could not (at least as a general rule) be at all analogous to those of a person writing down words at the dictation of another. If this therefore be the intended, as it would seem to be the natural meaning of the term *verbal inspiration*, that term cannot be rightly applied to the sacred volume as a whole. Its writers were evidently not mere passive instruments in the divine hand, such as

the pens with which they wrote were in their own. To assume, however, that even the large presence of a human element in these writings must necessarily involve their liability to mistake or error, is manifestly as unwarrantable as it would be to allege that the blending of the human with the divine in the person of Christ necessarily involved the presence of sin.

In the common usage of christians the scriptures are termed *the word of God*. However allowable this application of the term may be, when considered in itself, as expressing their divine origin and authority, there are yet two considerations which may reasonably suggest some doubt of its expediency. One, that as the term is never so used in the scriptures themselves, but (excepting its very rare application to our Lord) always employed to denote direct revelations or messages from God to man, and in the New Testament specifically and preeminently applied to the gospel of salvation by Christ, it would seem no more than due reverence to their authority to follow their example, in the absence of any sufficient reason for deviating from it. The other, that, by using the term in so wide a sense, we incur some risk of obscuring, if not losing sight of its more proper and emphatic one, that which bears witness to the great fact that God has, in the fullest and strictest sense of the word, *spoken* to men; making known to them his truth and will and ways, in old times by his servants the prophets, and in these last days by his own beloved Son. (Heb. i. 1, 2.)

In conclusion, there are two thoughts obviously suggested by the present state of things in the church as regards the subject which we have now been considering.

One, the vast practical moment of the question whether the testimony of the scriptures is or is not to be accounted as throughout true and reliable, stamped with the authority of God himself. All that is now passing conspires to show what must, from the nature of things, be inevitable, that to answer this question in the negative is to sap the foundation of all certainty respecting divine truth, and in so doing to prepare the way for its corruption or rejection to an indefinite extent. The other, that in asserting and vindicating the divine authority and inspiration of the scriptures, it is the solemn duty of christian believers to limit their statements to what the nature of the case demands and the scriptures themselves warrant; and to beware of laying stumbling-blocks in other men's way by making assertions and assuming positions incapable of being maintained, and which, instead of upholding that authority, serve rather to bring it into question, and to create or strengthen prejudices against it.

ESSAY II.

ON THE MEANING AND SCOPE OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

THAT the death of Christ was appointed by God to be in some way the means of delivering men from the punishment due to their sins, is universally received in the church as a truth most plainly taught in scripture. There is however great diversity of opinion both as to the particular way in which it availed for this end, and also as to the question whether it had reference to all mankind, or only to a portion of the human family. These two points will constitute the subject of the following inquiry.

As regards the first, although many of the numerous passages which speak directly or indirectly of Christ's dying for men, do so in terms not sufficiently definite to determine this point, it is far otherwise with a large number of them. To have a just idea of the nature and amount of the light which these latter throw upon the subject, it is necessary to look at them collectively. The following selection, exhibiting the testimony of various witnesses, will suffice for this purpose.

Isaiah. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." John the Baptist. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh

away the sin of the world." Christ himself. "The Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many.—My blood . . . which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The Apostle Paul. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood . . . for the remission of sins that are past . . . that he might be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.—Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.—We were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son." *Rom.* "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.—Ye are bought with a price." *1 Cor.* "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." *2 Cor.* "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." *Gal.* "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.—That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.—Christ hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." *Eph.* "Having made peace through the blood of his cross." *Col.* "Who gave himself a ransom for all." *1 Tim.* "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." *Tit.* The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. "When he had by himself purged our sins.—For this he did once when he offered up himself [a sacrifice for sins.]—By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.—How much more shall the blood of Christ, who . . . offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works.—By means of death for the redemption of the transgressions.—He appeared to put away sin by the

sacrifice of himself.—Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.—After he had offered one sacrifice for sins.” Peter. “Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.—Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.—Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”—John. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.—He is the propitiation for our sins, and . . . for the sins of the whole world.” 1 *John*. “And washed us from our sins in his own blood.—Have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” *Rev.* *

In looking at these passages, the first point to be noted is the emphatic directness and closeness of the connexion

* The bringing together of these numerous passages (and they are far from being the whole number) in which men's deliverance from the penalty of sin is specifically and emphatically ascribed to the death of Christ, will show how utterly opposed to the teaching of scripture is that view which ascribes it in a general way to his incarnation and life, regarding his death as little or nothing more than the fitting end of a life of holy and self-sacrificing obedience to the Father's will. The express statement in Heb. ii. 9, that the great end for which he became flesh was that he might die for men's redemption, will be found in perfect harmony with the whole teaching of scripture. The language of Rom. v. 19 is indeed sometimes appealed to as connecting man's justification and salvation with the general obedience of our Lord's life; but a very little attention to the context, and to the apostle's line of argument, will show “that the obedience of the one” (Christ) refers solely to that most illustrious and crowning act of obedience, his dying on the cross, (cf. Phil. ii. 8, and Heb. v. 7, 8,) just as “the one man's (Adam's) disobedience” plainly refers to that great act of transgression which brought sin and death into the world.

between the cause and the effect of which they speak, which their language everywhere indicates. It is manifest that this so clear and strongly marked a feature of the whole teaching of scripture in relation to this subject, must altogether forbid every interpretation of the meaning of our Lord's death which makes the connexion between it and man's deliverance indirect and circuitous; such, namely, as that it afforded an example of obedience and self-sacrifice, by the imitation of which men might render themselves acceptable to God; or that it procured for them the help of the Holy Spirit, by which they might be brought to repentance, faith and holiness. And that no such interpretation of its meaning as either of these can be the true one, is further manifest from the fact that nothing of the kind is either suggested by or reconcilable with the teaching of scripture as exhibited in the passages above cited.

But secondly, besides thus plainly indicating the closeness and directness of the connexion between Christ's death and man's deliverance, these passages will be also found no less plainly to indicate the particular nature of that connexion. Whether his dying for men be represented in them under the character of sacrifice or propitiation, of redemption or reconciliation, one idea everywhere unmistakeably presents itself, and often expressed in the most distinct terms,—that of *substitution*; the innocent taking the place of the guilty, and suffering, not merely on their behalf, but also in their stead.

And thirdly, as this idea of substitution necessarily involves that of the penalty denounced by the divine law against sin being actually enforced in the person of the substitute, so the latter idea is expressly indicated in some

of the above passages, and in others besides. For example, it seems utterly impossible to interpret the language of Isaiah liii. 5, 6, of Rom. iii. 26, and of Gal. iii. 10, 13, in any other way. And besides the Apostle's direct expression of the idea in these two passages, there are others in which he no less clearly expresses it, though in an indirect way. Such are Rom. vii. 4, and Gal. ii. 19, 20; in both of which he plainly represents believers in Christ as delivered from the law (regarded as a covenant) by reason of Christ himself having borne its penalty for them.

And while the passages above cited thus afford such an amount of direct and clear evidence that this was really the meaning of our Lord's death, it may be unhesitatingly affirmed that there is no one passage in the Bible, either directly or indirectly referring to that event, which is in any degree opposed to or inconsistent with it.

Again, while the language of these passages thus plainly suggests and sustains the idea of substitution, it will be found wholly irreconcilable with any other interpretation of our Lord's death: not merely (as we have already seen) with such interpretations as make the connexion between it and men's deliverance indirect and circuitous, but also with those which give it a more direct character; such as that which represents God as granting to men forgiveness of sins by way of reward for Christ's obedience. There are indeed some passages of the New Testament (as Eph. iv. 32) which, taken alone, might admit of such an interpretation; but there is a far larger number, including most of those above cited, which would not do so in any degree whatever.

Further, the idea thus plainly suggested by the passages

above cited derives a strong not to say decisive confirmation from the manifest allusion which many of them make to the animal sacrifices of former dispensations; since it is certain from the evidence both of the Old and the New Testaments, that those sacrifices were universally understood to have, and really had a vicarious meaning, though only in the way of shadow or type. See e.g. Lev. i. 4, xvi. 21, 22, xvii. 11, Mic. vi. 6; 7, Heb. ix. 22, and x. 4, 11. Nor is it merely that many passages relating to the death of Christ directly refer to animal sacrifices, and even apply the term sacrifice to it, but one of the most prominent parts of the Epistle to the Hebrews is an argument expressly intended to show that his death was the substance and reality of which those sacrifices were appointed to be a shadow and type. See especially Chs. ix. and x.

Next, it is to be specially noted that this view of the import of our Lord's death, far from being founded on any strained interpretation of the language of the passages above cited, is so indisputably their most obvious and natural meaning that, if it be not the true one, it would seem impossible to avoid the conclusion that the language of scripture is fitted rather to mislead than to guide men in their search after divine truth. So entirely indeed is this the case that it seems hardly credible that any other interpretation should ever have been thought of, had the language of the passages been alone considered, and no bias been given to men's judgment by supposed antecedent objections to their natural meaning. And this view of the matter is strongly confirmed by the fact that all arguments against the idea of substitution are found mainly to consist (as we shall presently see) in such objections, and not in

attempts to show either that the language of the passages referred to does not admit of that idea, or that it plainly suggests some other and very different one.

But besides the direct evidence afforded by the language of these passages, there are certain other considerations which serve strongly to confirm the vicarious character and meaning of our Lord's death.

Thus, first, while his death is so constantly and emphatically spoken of in scripture as the appointed means of delivering men from the punishment due to their sins, that punishment itself is no less constantly and emphatically declared to be death (see e.g. Ezek. xviii. 20, and Rom. vi. 23); a correspondence which at least perfectly harmonizes with, if indeed it do not plainly suggest the idea of the one being appointed and accepted as a substitute for the other. How far the meaning of the term *death* is exactly the same in both cases, is a question which will presently be considered.

Next, while the idea of substitution fully accounts for the necessity of our Lord's death, for the appointment of those animal sacrifices which were confessedly typical of it, for the remarkable circumstances connected with it which we shall presently have occasion to notice, and for the close connexion of the forgiveness of sins with it, no other interpretation of the meaning of his death accounts, with any approach to the same fulness, for either one of these things.

Again, the truth of this interpretation derives no small confirmation from the want of distinctness which is so observable in all others. They are clear and definite only in their negative aspect,—their rejection of the vicarious

character of our Lord's death. When we examine their positive one,—the attempts which they make to give another explanation in its stead,—all is found to be vague and indistinct.

Lastly, a presumption of the strongest possible kind that the interpretation of our Lord's death which has here been, first deduced from an examination of the language of scripture, and then confirmed by other considerations, is the true one, is furnished by the fact that, in every age of the church, a vast majority (including men of every grade of mental capacity and acquirement) of those who have most plainly shown themselves in character life and conversation to be real disciples of Christ, however widely they may have differed from one another as to many other matters, have closely agreed in this.

Such being the evidence, both direct and collateral, for the vicarious character of our Lord's death, it may well be regarded as an indisputable and fundamental part of his truth. It is not however on this account only that it is and ever has been dear to Christ's believing followers, but also because of the profit and blessing which, through the working of the Holy Spirit, they find it yield to their souls, by serving to deepen their sense both of the holiness and majesty of the divine law, and of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin;" by giving them peace and confidence such as they feel that nothing else could give, in the assurance that their sins have been wholly and for ever washed away in the blood that was shed for their redemption; and, above all, by calling forth the strongest feelings of gratitude and love of which their nature is capable, in the thought of that most wondrous and undeserved love which has been

thus shown to them. In the natural operation and result of these feelings we see what they have ever justly regarded as a most powerful evidence for the truth of this view of the meaning of their divine Master's death,—its peculiar fitness to secure that without which any provision whatever for the pardon of sin would wholly fail either to satisfy man's own moral needs, or really to glorify his Creator,—an earnest habitual loving and fruitful endeavour to do the will of God, and keep his holy law. (See Rom. viii. 3, 4.) And here let it be noted that, although the rejectors of the vicarious meaning of our Lord's death seem disposed to claim the idea of its affording a most illustrious example of self-sacrifice in obedience to the will of God, as specially their own, that idea is no less included in the interpretation which they reject, and no less recognized and insisted upon by its advocates.

As supplementary to the preceding inquiry, let us here briefly look at the chief of those antecedent objections, already referred to, which have been urged against the vicarious import of our Lord's death; namely, that it represents God as vindictive implacable and unjust, in refusing to pardon sin except on the condition of an innocent person's bearing its penalty in the sinner's stead. As to the idea of injustice, it is obviously altogether excluded by the voluntary character of our Lord's propitiatory sacrifice for sin. As to the remaining part of the objection, observe—

First, that men do not thus judge of the conduct of earthly rulers, but by common consent recognize the claims of justice no less than those of mercy; and insist on the necessity of vindicating the majesty of law no less than

they plead for a wise and guarded exercise of clemency. On what principle then is a different kind of judgment to be applied to the Ruler of the universe? Certain it is that, in the revelation which he has made to us in scripture of himself and of his ways, justice has no less its place than mercy: nor is the majesty of his violated law less plainly asserted than his readiness to forgive its infraction in the way and on the terms of his own appointing.

Secondly, if (as is agreed on all hands) it was by the will and appointment of God that Christ died for the sins of men, it is evident that the idea of God's refusing (so to speak) to pardon them except through the intervention of his death, is alike necessarily involved, whatever be the particular way in which the meaning and effect of that death are interpreted. Now while it is most certain that there is nothing in this idea which necessarily implies vindictiveness or implacability on the part of God, it is equally certain that the appointment of Christ's death for the sins of men is constantly represented in scripture as a most illustrious manifestation and evidence of God's love towards them. But further, since it is also clearly represented as being so by reason of the sacrifice (so to speak) which it involved on his part (see e.g. Rom. viii. 32), it is plain that, whatever interpretation of the meaning and effect of our Lord's death most enhances the idea of his sufferings, must correspondingly enhance that of the Father's love; and (as we shall presently see) this is what the vicarious interpretation indisputably does. Accordingly, they who advocate that interpretation delight to regard it as setting forth the love of God towards men in the highest conceivable degree.

Thirdly, that there can be nothing in this doctrine revolting either to men's moral and spiritual sense, or to their reason and understanding, but the very reverse, is most manifest from the consideration that the general consent of Christ's followers, before referred to, includes multitudes not only of the most noble and elevated of mankind in all that relates to moral character, but also of such as have been distinguished by the highest mental capacities and achievements.

The foregoing argument has been confined to the general subject of the vicarious character of our Lord's death, leaving the deeply interesting and most solemn question of the particular nature of that substitutory penalty which he therein paid for the sins of men, wholly untouched. Though this can hardly be spoken of as a subject of direct or express revelation, it is yet one on which the testimony of scripture throws much important light, and is therefore so far rightly open to inquiry. Observe then—

First, whatever may have been the intensity of the Redeemer's bodily sufferings on the cross, and of such mental anguish as his treatment by men could produce, these alone do not seem either to afford any sufficient explanation of his preceding mental conflict in the garden, or to be a fitting substitute for that awful penalty from which his death was to be the means of delivering men, and of which penalty utter exclusion from the presence and favour of God would seem to be the very essence.

Secondly, that although the penalty which he bore was most certainly not in all points the very same with that from which he delivered men, it seems antecedently reason-

able, and that in a very high degree, to suppose that it would have some close relation to or correspondence with it.

Thirdly, that it seems impossible to regard our Lord's utterance on the cross of David's words in the 22nd Psalm, as merely referring to his being left by God a prey to the malice and cruelty of his enemies. It naturally suggests the idea of distress of soul, arising out of a sense of deprivation of the light of God's countenance, and of the present manifestation of his favour. (See Ps. xxii. 2.)

These several considerations (and others might be urged) strongly suggest the idea that he who was God's own beloved Son was nevertheless ~~they~~ called to experience (though doubtless in a way altogether beyond our capacity fully to comprehend), for men's sake and in their stead, that fearful indignation and wrath of God against sin, and that consequent awful separation of the sinner from his favour and presence, from which his death was the appointed means of delivering them. Certain it is that such has been the general persuasion of those who, as most plainly bearing the image of Christ, and most closely treading in his steps, may be reasonably supposed to have had the clearest spiritual insight into such a subject; and also that they have found it greatly to enhance their sense both of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and of that unutterable love which provided such a means for putting it away.

We come now to the second question proposed to be considered in this Essay. Did Christ die for the whole human race, or only for some portion of it? This question has of course no reference to the *retrospective* aspect of his death, since that is a point respecting which the church seems to have been always of one mind.

Among the many passages which seem more or less clearly to decide in favour of the former of these views, there are several (e.g. John i. 29, iii. 16, 17, vi. 51, xii. 47, 2 Cor. v. 10, Heb. ii. 9, and 1 John ii. 2) which it is so obviously impossible to interpret in any other way without doing the most unjustifiable violence to their language, that their being so interpreted by any one can only be accounted for on the supposition of his entertaining some strong antecedent objection to the truth which they seem so manifestly to teach. And that this is the true explanation of the case is abundantly evident from the fact that objections of this kind form the chief if not sole argument of those who contend for the limited scope of our Lord's propitiatory sacrifice; and that, far from venturing to allege that the meaning which they affix to the passages just referred to is the most obvious and natural interpretation of their language, such persons are obliged to content themselves with labouring to prove that it is an admissible one. The antecedent objections by which they are influenced appear to be mainly these two.

First, that to believe that Christ died for the sins of all men, is to believe that, as respects a very large portion of the human race, he died in vain. There is no need to have recourse to any theological argument to meet this objection. All that the case really requires is an appeal to the indisputable fact that God and Christ are repeatedly spoken of in scripture as labouring in vain for men's salvation. It is sufficient to refer to such passages as Prov. i. 24, 25, Isaiah lxxv. 2, 12, Jer. xxxv. 15, and Matt. xxiii. 37.

Second, that our Lord is expressly represented in scripture as having died for the church. See e.g. John x. 11, 15,

and Eph. v. 25. Here again the answer is obvious and simple; namely, that in scripture, as in ordinary discourse and writing, we often find things which are common to a large number of persons spoken of with particular reference to a portion of that number, when the subject immediately in hand refers to the latter only. Thus, while our Lord, in John v. 28, 29, and the apostle Paul, in Acts xxiv. 15, expressly speak of the resurrection of the last day as common to "the just and the unjust," Christ's mention of it in Luke xx. 35, the apostle's whole argument respecting it in 1 Cor. xv, and his description of it in 1 Thess. iv. 14-17, all relate so exclusively to the resurrection of the former, that no one, judging by these passages alone, would suppose that there is to be any resurrection of the latter. The obvious explanation is that, in each of the three last mentioned passages, the speaker's or writer's immediate object had exclusive reference to God's people: and the same explanation no less obviously applies to the passages above referred to, in which Christ is represented as dying for the church.

But besides the direct evidence for the universal scope of our Lord's death which is afforded by the language of scripture respecting it, there is also evidence of an indirect kind, and hardly if at all less decisive, furnished by the terms of the commission which he gave to his apostles to preach the gospel of salvation by him to all men, and by their own fulfilment of that commission. If Christ really died for a portion only of those to whom, in obedience to his commands, they preached his gospel, it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that the offer of salvation which it included, and which was indeed its very essence, must have been, so far as the residue were concerned, a mere mockery.

While, however, the scriptures thus plainly teach, both directly and indirectly, that Christ died for the sins of all men, it is manifest that, as regards the actual event, and consequently in the mind of Him who sees the end from the beginning, his death had a widely different aspect towards those who shall be found at the last day among the saved, and those who shall then be numbered with the lost. (Cf. the apostle's language in 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.)

ESSAY III.

ON THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION.

By far the most frequent use in the New Testament Scriptures of words denoting a divine predestination and election of men is in relation to the church of Christ; and it is to this application of them that the following inquiry exclusively refers.

It might seem at first sight an undertaking of very little promise to endeavour to ascertain what is really the teaching of scripture in relation to a subject which has so long and so greatly divided the judgment of Christ's followers, of men alike eminent for mental endowments and for fervent piety. Yet if the holy scriptures were really designed to instruct the church of Christ in his truth, it can hardly be that any prominent part of their teaching is so obscure or ambiguous as that it must necessarily give rise to endless diversity of judgment among his followers. Rather would it seem reasonable to conclude that the true meaning must be discoverable, if only it be sought for in the right way. Added to this, the later course and present state of opinion in the church, in relation to the subject of our inquiry, seems (as we shall hereafter see) to hold out far more prospect of at least an approach to agreement than could have been hoped for in past times.

The true mode of pursuing the inquiry can hardly admit of question. As the subject is directly and definitely treated of in only a comparatively small number of passages, the first step must obviously be to endeavour to get at the writer's meaning by carefully examining these in connexion with the context. The next will be to consider whether the conclusion thus arrived at is sustained by, or at least in harmony with other passages which more casually and incidentally refer to the subject. The third, to test it yet further by such other parts of the teaching of scripture as seem fitted for the purpose. Besides the special need of prayer for the illumination of God's Spirit which the peculiar difficulties of the subject so plainly indicate, there is another prerequisite no less plainly indicated by its nature and circumstances, and one without which there can be little hope of so prosecuting the inquiry as to arrive at a true conclusion;—that of as far as possible divesting the mind, not only of all preconceived opinions, and of all preoccupation with the conflicting views of theologians, but also of all antecedent objections to any particular conclusions that may possibly be arrived at. As to the last point, the only true and safe course, in this or any other such case, plainly is, first to ascertain what the scripture really seems to teach, and then to look at any difficulties or objections which may seem to attach to that teaching.

The following are the passages in which the subject of our inquiry is most directly and fully spoken of; and their citation collectively will serve to bring it distinctly into view. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also

did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Rom. viii. 28-30. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Eph. i. 3-5. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." Id. vv. 11, 12. "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii. 13. "Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter i. 2.

In looking at these passages, the first point that demands attention is the meaning of the terms predestination and election. Words denoting election or choice, when applied in scripture to God's appointments in relation to men, always imply his choosing or setting apart some one or more of the human family for some particular purpose or end: while the use of words denoting predestination or

fore-appointment, in connexion with them, indicates that the election spoken of formed part of his eternal counsels. As both these terms are applied in scripture to the particular subject of our inquiry, so they are to some extent used indifferently and convertibly to express the same general idea; and will therefore be sometimes so used in the following inquiry.

Next, in proceeding to examine the contents of these passages, we find two general points too manifest to be matter of controversy: one, that the subjects of the predestination and election spoken of in them are *in some sense* christian believers and members of Christ's church; the other, that the blessings offered by his gospel constitute *in some sense* the purpose and end of their predestination and election. Since however it is evident from the contents of the apostolic epistles that (as Christ himself had expressly foretold) the various churches addressed in them included "tares" as well as "wheat," nominal and false as well as real and true believers, an important twofold question here arises. Did the apostles mean to include both the above classes in what they said about predestination and election, or only the latter? And did they mean a predestination and election to the profession of faith in Christ, implying access to those spiritual and eternal blessings which his gospel announces, or one to the exercise of living faith in him, implying their actual attainment? In other words, Who are the subjects of the predestination and election of which they speak, and what does it imply? This question will be found to include the essence of the whole controversy about the meaning of the New Testament doctrine of predestination and election. Let us then see if

we can deduce an answer to each of its parts from an examination of the language and context of the passages already cited. Before however we proceed to do this in relation to the first part, something must be premised.

When the apostles, in addressing particular churches or groups of churches, use (as we constantly find them doing) language which, from its very nature, can only be applicable to true believers in Christ, (see e.g. Rom. viii. 14-17, Eph. i. 3, 13, 15, Col. i. 3-5, 1 Thess. i. 2-7, 2 Thess. i. 3, and 1 Pet. i. 3-9,) we know certainly that they could not mean it to be understood as applying to merely nominal ones, though they may say nothing directly about such a limitation. To have always or even commonly done this, would have been not only wholly unlike their ordinary manner of writing, but altogether needless; since the dull-est mind could not be ignorant that it was a frequent subject of their most express and earnest teaching. See e.g. 2 Cor. xii. 21, and Phil. iii. 18, 19. *

Such being the case, it is obvious that, when we find them describing those whom they addressed as persons predestinated and chosen of God, we are not entitled to assume that they meant these terms to be understood as applying to *all* who were accounted as belonging to the church, though they may not directly speak of or hint at any limitation. Whether this was or was not their meaning, must be determined by such an examination of the

* The distinction between real and nominal christians, thus constantly implied and often expressly indicated in the apostolic epistles, is no less plainly intimated by Christ himself throughout his teaching. See e.g. Matt. vii. 21-23, xiii. 47-50, Luke xiv. 26-33, and John xv. 2.

passages in which the terms occur, taken in connexion with their context, as that on which we are now to enter. It is evident that, in either case, the predestination and election must be strictly a *personal* one, as having relation to certain individuals, both Jews and Gentiles, chosen out of the mass.*

Beginning with Rom. viii. 28-30, the persons there said to be "predestinated and called," † and who are afterwards (v. 33) termed "elect," are expressly described as those who "love God," and who are "justified" and (speaking in an anticipatory way) "glorified." But further, the whole connexion of the chapter shows that the persons here referred to are the same with those previously described (in vv. 14-26) as being "led by the Spirit of God," and therefore manifestly "sons of God;" as having "received the spirit of adoption;" as persons in whom "the Spirit himself beareth witness . . . that they are the children of God;" who, as being such, are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;" who are further described as "saved by hope;" and of whom it is said that "the Spirit helpeth their infirmities, . . . and maketh intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered."

In Eph. i. and ii. the "predestinated and chosen" are

* See the Note at the end of this Essay.

† Though the word *called* is used by our Lord in the sense of *invited*, and thus stands contrasted with *chosen* (see e.g. Matt. xxii. 14), in the apostolic epistles it is commonly employed in a sense (theologically distinguished as implying an *effectual* call) which allows the two words to be applied indifferently and convertibly to christian believers. Cf. e.g. Rom. viii. 30 with 33, and 1 Cor. i. 26 with 27 and 28.

described as being "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;" as "having redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" as "having obtained an inheritance" and "trusted in him;" as being "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise;" as subjects of the apostle's continual thanksgiving to God because of their "faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints;" as having been "quickened" from a state of "death in trespasses and sins, . . . raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;" and as "saved by grace . . . through faith."

In 2 Thess. ii. 13, not only does the apostle's whole manner of speaking plainly imply that those whom he addressed as "chosen" of God "from the beginning" were actual partakers of "sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth," but he places them in direct and express contrast to those (future) deceived and wicked professors of Christ's name of whom he had just before been speaking.

In 1 Peter i. 2-8 the "elect" are in like manner described as actual partakers of "sanctification of the spirit, obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" as "begotten again unto a lively hope;" as "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" as "loving" Christ, "believing in him," and (notwithstanding all their persecutions and afflictions) "rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

So far then as the passages before cited are concerned, it seems evident that, when terms denoting predestination and election are applied to Christ's church, they exclusively refer to his true and living members. And though the evidence of this mainly consists in the association with

those terms of such characteristics as cannot possibly apply to mere nominal christians, it is strongly confirmed by two other considerations. One, the great improbability that God should be spoken of as eternally predestinating and choosing men to that which, far from necessarily implying any real blessing, might and sometimes did prove a fearful curse. See e.g. 2 Peter ii. 21. The other, the seeming impossibility that the apostles should have offered fervent and continual thanksgiving to God for having predestinated and chosen persons concerning whom their divine Master had expressly declared that at "the end of the world" they "shall be gathered out of his kingdom . . and be cast into a furnace of fire;" and some of whom they themselves describe as "not having repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed;" as being "enemies of the cross of Christ . . whose end is destruction;" and as "having trodden under foot the Son of God . . and done despite unto the Spirit of grace." See 2 Cor. xii. 21, Phil. iii. 18, 19, and Heb. x. 29. *

* It has been urged as a strong presumptive argument in favour of that interpretation of the New Testament doctrine of predestination and election which makes it refer to the professing church of Christ at large, that, judging from the writings of the Fathers, no other interpretation was known to the church before Augustine's time. Even were this certain as a fact, (which however, looking at all the circumstances of the case, may well admit of question,) what we know from that source of the general state of things in the church after the apostolic age, and especially of the tendency which so early manifested itself virtually to lose sight of the distinction between real and nominal believers in Christ, by regarding baptism as far more than a mere symbol and token of christian profession, would justly entitle us to give it very little weight.

Let us now look at some passages in which the subject is introduced rather allusively than formally, yet in such a way as will be found to throw the clearest light upon the question immediately before us.

In our Lord's discourse to his disciples, related in Matt. xxiv. we first find him (v. 22) speaking of the believing portion of the Jewish nation as God's "elect," and saying that for their sakes the utter destruction of that nation would be averted; next (v. 24), describing these "elect" as persons who were (taking the lowest possible view of his meaning) no way likely to be deceived by false Christs or prophets, and thus placing them in marked contrast to another portion of his professed followers of whom he had previously spoken (v. 5) as so deceived; and lastly (v. 31), employing the same word "elect" (as he had before done in his parable of the marriage feast, Ch. xxii. 14,) to denote those who shall be found his own saved people at his second coming.

In 1 Thess. i. 3, 4, the apostle connects his persuasion of the "election" of those whom he was addressing with the remembrance of their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father."

The seemingly insuperable objections which have been urged in the text to our understanding the doctrine in the sense just spoken of, even in its application to the primitive church, become yet stronger when we attempt to apply it to the succeeding (and to a large extent still existing) state of things, when the limits of the visible church of Christ became so little defined as virtually to identify it, like the Jewish church of old, with the nations of which it formed part.

The apostolic exhortation in 2 Peter i. 10, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure," is no less conclusive than any of the preceding passages: for while it could not possibly refer to men's profession of the christian faith, since that was an indisputable fact, both the language which he here uses, and what goes before, plainly show his meaning to be, "See to it that you have, in the way which I have just pointed out, sure evidence of your being really of the number of Christ's called and chosen people." Cf. 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

We come now to the second part of the question which we have to consider: What does God's predestination and election of believers in Christ imply? The answer to this question may be at once inferred from that which has been given to the preceding one; since a predestination or election which has exclusive reference to the true and living members of Christ's mystical body must needs include whatever pertains to their character and standing as such; and must therefore imply, not merely access to the blessings of the gospel, and fellowship with Christ's visible church, but also the saving grace of which all such persons are now partakers, and the glory that awaits them in the world to come.

This answer is however much more than a mere matter of inference, since it is directly and plainly furnished by the principal passages to which we have just been referring. It will be found that, while each of those passages or its immediate context expressly speaks of either the present characteristics of a true christian, or his future blessedness, or both of these, as constituting the purpose and end of God's predestination and election, nothing is said which can in

any way suggest the idea of that end being merely a knowledge and profession of the christian faith.

But plain as this is, a further question here arises. Though the purposes of God spoken of in scripture are often absolute and irreversible, (for example, those which relate to the death of Christ, and to whatever is matter of express prediction,) they are by no means always so, but are sometimes manifestly conditional and reversible, though nothing may have been expressly said to intimate this. See e.g. 1 Sam. ii. 30, and Jer. xviii. 7-10. Hence the question may fairly be raised, whether the divine predestination of christian believers to present holiness and future happiness is to be understood as absolute and irreversible, or not.

Now several considerations seem plainly to require an affirmative answer to this question. Thus first, while the expression "chosen before the foundation of the world" seems in itself hardly if at all reconcileable with the idea of anything uncertain or reversible, we never find such expressions applied to subjects which unquestionably are so, while they are often applied to those which clearly are not. See Matt. xxv. 34, Acts xv. 18, and 1 Peter i. 20. Next, the apostles' fervent thanksgiving for their fellow-believers' predestination and election in Christ seems equally irreconcilable with the idea that this can relate to anything not certain in regard to its accomplishment. Thirdly, the persons spoken of as predestinated and chosen in Christ are (as we have seen) represented as actually renewed and sanctified; the two characters being evidently inseparably connected in the writers' minds. Lastly, the present sanctification and future salvation of believers in Christ are so closely associated in these passages, so alike represented

as constituting the purpose and end of the divine predestination, that, if this be absolute in relation to the former, it must be also to the latter. Added to which, it seems in the nature of things incredible that either God's eternal predestination and election, or the apostle's fervent thanksgiving for it, should have reference to a merely temporary blessing on earth, however great that might be, to be succeeded by a state of endless woe in the world to come. And, could any doubt on this point remain, it must surely be removed by our Lord's express application, in Matt. xxii. 14, and xxiv. 31; of the word *elect* to his saved people at the last day.

The result then of our examination of the language and context of the principal passages which speak of God's predestination and election of believers in Christ, is, that it means nothing less than an absolute choice and appointment, from all eternity, of those who, through living faith in him, inherit everlasting life.* Now, in regard to this conclusion, observe, First, that it involves no strained interpretation of the language of the passages referred to, but is their most natural and obvious meaning, whether they be considered in themselves, or compared with other passages in which similar language occurs. See e.g. Acts ii. 23, xv. 18, and 1 Peter i. 20. Accordingly we find that

* Seeing that God's redeemed people of all ages are plainly represented in scripture as constituting one family in Christ, there can be no question that, if the above be the true interpretation of the New Testament doctrine of predestination and election, that doctrine must no less apply to such of them as lived before his manifestation in the flesh, than to those who have lived since that event. As however it is to the latter alone that this doctrine directly refers, so it is of these only that we here speak.

the above view of the doctrine is not objected to on the ground of its being manifestly at variance with the language used, or because that language plainly means something else, but (as we shall hereafter see) mainly, if not solely, on the ground of alleged antecedent objections to the view considered in itself. Secondly, that while the above view of the doctrine is thus plainly deduced from the language and context of the principal passages in which it is spoken of, it is in no way opposed by or inconsistent with the teaching of any other passage which refers to the subject. Thirdly, that the various evidence which has been adduced as decisively establishing this view, has been shown to be no less decisive against the alternative and opposite one.

Thus far we have confined our attention to passages in which the terms predestination and election, or others equivalent to them, occur. Let us now see whether there are not other passages which manifestly relate to the same subject, and teach the same thing, though under different modes of expression. Of course, if there are such, the evidence that the doctrine as above stated is really a constituent part of God's revealed truth becomes materially enlarged and strengthened.

In John vi. 37, 39, x. 29, and xvii. 2, our Lord speaks of his disciples and followers as having been "given him" by the Father. Now in each of these passages, as in all those directly referring to the predestination and election of believers in Christ which we have been examining, the context plainly shows the persons thus spoken of to be his true disciples. * Further, their being so given no less

* This might seem, at first sight, to be contradicted by what our Lord says about Judas in Ch. xvii. 12. But a comparison of that

plainly implies the idea of their being an actual possession, first of the Father, and then of the Son also; an idea which we find distinctly expressed in Ch. xvii. 9, 10. These ideas of gift and possession again naturally suggest that of the predestination and election elsewhere spoken of in relation to the same class of persons. And, lastly, the correspondence of meaning seems fully established by the emphatic manner in which eternal life is represented as their assured inheritance. See especially the language of Ch. xvii. 2.

In like manner, while a comparison of Rev. xvii. 8, * with xiv. 9-12, plainly shows that the persons spoken of in the former passage are real as contrasted with merely nominal christians, the language used in it is so identical with that applied in Eph. i. 4 to the elect (cf. also Matt. xxv. 34), as naturally to suggest a corresponding identity of the general meaning and teaching of the two passages. As regards the former, there are undoubtedly passages (as Rev. iii. 5, and xxii. 19) in which the figure used in it does not imply an absolute and irreversible appointment. But (as we have before seen in relation to other language applied

passage with his language in Luke iv. 26, 27, will at once show that the Greek words rendered *but* in the former and *save* in the latter, do not mean that Judas was one of those whom the Father had given him, but the very reverse. *But only* would better, though not fully express their true import.

* The Greek text of Ch. xiii. 8, ought probably to be so punctuated and rendered as to convey the same meaning: "Whose names were not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb." Cf. as to the last words, the construction of Ch. v. 12.

to the divine purposes and appointments) this in no degree forbids that it should sometimes have such a meaning. Each particular case must of course be judged of by its own language and other circumstances; and in the one now before us these seem plainly to indicate that meaning.

One other passage may be here cited as seeming, like the foregoing ones, plainly to imply that which we have concluded to be the New Testament doctrine of predestination and election: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Acts xiii. 48. It would surely be difficult to assign any other meaning to the words.

Not only however is the above view of the New Testament doctrine of predestination and election thus plainly deduced from passages which directly speak of it, and confirmed by others which seem manifestly to refer to it, though in different terms, but that doctrine, as so interpreted, would seem to be a necessary inference from another part of the teaching of scripture. While the New Testament scriptures teach in the most express manner that only a portion of the human race will be found at the last day partakers of Christ's salvation, they no less plainly teach that all his saved people owe their salvation to divine grace alone; that is to say, not only the provision made for such salvation, but also the disposition to avail themselves of it, including the repentance and faith by means of which it is obtained. See e.g. Acts xi. 18, xvi. 14, 1 Cor. iv. 7, and Eph. ii. 8. Now it surely seems impossible to exclude the idea of election from such a state of things as this, whether the word be used or not: and if there be election, it would seem to be an inevitable inference from the divine attributes that there must be predestination also. See Acts xv. 18. In

truth, it may be safely averred that all who hold the doctrine of salvation by grace, in the above full sense, do also virtually hold that of election, however they may stumble at the term; so that, were they pressed to make an alternative use of the word *choose* in relation to their standing as true disciples of Christ, they would without doubt freely admit that, if he had not chosen them, they would assuredly never have chosen him.

In the preceding inquiry and argument, nothing has been said about the *grounds* of God's predestination and election of believers in Christ, because it is a subject of which the scriptures make no direct mention. It is however certain from their general teaching, and especially from the apostle's language in Rom. ix. 19-24, that all we know or can know of the grounds of this or any other predestination and election of God, is that it is an exercise of his divine sovereignty; while it is no less certain that such exercise must ever be in perfect harmony with his character and attributes. What these are, he has fully revealed to us, because it was needful that we should have a true idea of them. Again, he has largely, though still very partially, made known to us his counsels and ways, because the knowledge of them to such an extent was also needful for us. But of their ultimate grounds and reasons he has made no specific disclosure; doubtless not only because it was not needful for us to be acquainted with them, but also because he would have his children exercise themselves in humility, and in trustfulness towards him; an exercise far more fitted to yield them true spiritual profit, in their present condition and circumstances, than any mere increase of knowledge could possibly be.

Whatever be the meaning of the New Testament doctrine of predestination and election, it must of necessity, in common with every other part of divine truth, have a practical use. Accordingly we find the Apostle's argument in Rom. viii. and ix. plainly pointing to three different ways in which it has such use. First, by placing in the strongest light the absolute freeness of God's grace or favour towards men, as having its origin in his own eternal purpose and choice, and as being therefore wholly irrespective of their deserts, either actual or foreseen.* See ch. ix. 6-13; also xi. 5, 6. Next, by placing in equally strong light the absolute and unchallengeable sovereignty of the Most High. See ch. ix. 19-23. And, thirdly, by affording to the believer a strong ground of confidence and assurance in relation to his present and eternal safety in Christ. See ch. viii. 31-39.

Now although that view of the doctrine which makes it refer to men's hearing and professed reception of Christ's

* It has been sometimes alleged that the Apostle's use of *fore-know* &c. in Rom. viii. 29, xi. 2, and 1 Peter i. 2, implies that the predestination and election of believers in Christ has its foundation in the divine foreknowledge of their character and conduct. Not only however is there nothing in the teaching of scripture to support this view, and much that is utterly irreconcilable with it (see e.g. Rom. ix. 11), but in 1 Peter i. 20, *foreknown* (Greek) is evidently used as equivalent to *fore-ordained*, and is accordingly so rendered in our version. In the passages above referred to, the meaning of the word seems plainly to be, that the persons spoken of were from all eternity accounted by God as his own people. This interpretation of it will be found in perfect harmony with the emphatic sense of *know* which is so common in the New Testament. See e.g. Matt. vii. 23, and 1 Cor. viii. 3.

truth, undoubtedly affords *some* place for the first two uses, it manifestly does so in a far less degree than the one which has been here taken; since the latter attributes a far higher scope and meaning to the divine predestination and election than the former. But, as regards the third use, while the latter (as we shall presently see) gives it a place of great practical moment, the former evidently gives it none at all; since a predestination and election which is merely to the knowledge and profession of christian truth cannot possibly become to any one a ground of assurance either of present or of future salvation. For the latter view to become such, there must of course be a *personal* application of the doctrine. To this subject let us therefore now direct our attention.

First then, since (as we have already seen) the only persons described as predestinated and chosen are true believers in Christ, living members of his church, there can be no ground, apart from the proper evidence of a man's being such, for his regarding himself or being accounted by others one of God's elect. Now as this evidence, in both its subjective and its objective parts,—not only in that which is furnished by men's feelings and consciousness, but also in that which is afforded by their character and life,—is comparative and variable, not absolute and fixed, ranging from such high degrees as practically amount to demonstration, down to such lower ones as leave more or less room for doubt and uncertainty, it of course follows that their title to be accounted subjects of the divine predestination and election must be of a corresponding character. And further, as the evidence of a man's being a true christian must be mainly drawn

from his present spiritual character, and not from any past condition, real or supposed, so also must his title to be accounted one of God's chosen people in Christ.

But, secondly, supposing that evidence to be of the highest kind, affording any one a just ground of assurance that he is really a living member of Christ, and a correspondingly strong reason for regarding himself as one of his elect, will it afford him ground for certainly and absolutely concluding that he is such? Hardly so; since this, as we have seen, would imply the certainty of his final salvation, whereas, if we take a just and comprehensive view of the teaching of scripture, (not looking only at such passages as Rom. viii. 38, 39, but also at such as 1 Cor. ix. 27, Heb. vi. 4-6,* and 2 Peter, i. 9, 10,) we do not seem entitled to regard any evidence whatever of a man's present spiritual condition as making his final perseverance in godliness a matter of absolute certainty, or his eventual fall from it one of utter impossibility.

Now however such a state of things as this may fall short of the natural craving of the human mind for certainty in relation to the future, is it not manifestly such as is best fitted for our actual condition and circumstances, nay, all that a child of God needs to desire? On the one hand, it affords ample room for his attaining to such an assurance

* As the Greek word rendered *if they shall fall away* in our authorized version of v. 6 exactly corresponds with those rendered *were enlightened—have tasted—and were made partakers*—in vv. 4, 5, a corresponding rendering of it would be *and have fallen away*; nor does there seem any reason for not adopting the latter. It would seem evident both from the context here, and from ch. x. 23-31, that the writer is not speaking of a merely suppositious case.

of his oneness with Christ, as may rightly become to him the ground of a strong though humble persuasion that he is one of God's elect, and consequently that his final salvation rests on nothing less than the eternal and unchangeable purpose and counsel of Jehovah. On the other, he is taught to feel that there is no place in all this for presumption or false security, but that the blessed confidence which he is permitted to entertain of his perfect safety in Christ, is indissolubly bound up with the necessity of his continually abiding in lowliness of mind watchfulness and prayer.

Lastly, not only have we the testimony of multitudes of christian believers in successive generations, that they have found in their own experience the doctrine as here interpreted to be greatly profitable to their souls in each of the ways above noted, but in their humble, watchful, prayerful and holy walk, we have the clearest evidence that this doctrine, however liable, in common with every other part of God's truth, to be abused, is not justly chargeable with the dangers and mischiefs which are so often ascribed to it.

In having thus, first endeavoured to ascertain the true meaning of the New Testament doctrine of predestination and election, and next spoken of its practical uses, I have accomplished the more immediate object of this Essay. Considering however the difficulties which the doctrine as thus interpreted unquestionably involves, and the nature and variety of the objections which have been urged against it, I feel that some notice of these is due both to the subject and to the reader.

That a subject which so directly relates to the counsels and ways of God should involve difficulties, might well be

expected. Not only however are they certainly not greater than those which attach to other subjects of the same class, but (as we shall presently see) they are such as would equally exist had nothing been said in scripture about God's predestination and election of believers in Christ. As regards the objections which have been urged against this doctrine, believing, as I do, that it is plainly taught in scripture, I am of course antecedently persuaded that they cannot possibly be valid. But more than this, a careful consideration of them has convinced me that their invalidity is easily demonstrable. To demonstrate it with any degree of fulness would however demand a space wholly incompatible with my present purpose. I shall therefore content myself with briefly indicating some of the ways in which the leading objections may be met.

First then, the doctrine has been said to be irreconcilable with men's freedom of will and action. Passing by the unquestionable fact that this assertion is wholly incapable of proof, let us glance at some more direct ways of meeting the objection. One is, that the alternative interpretation of the doctrine—that which makes it relate to men's hearing and professed reception of the gospel message—is equally open to this objection; since, if it be impossible to reconcile divine predestination with human freedom in the case of those who, in the Apostle's days, truly embraced the christian faith, it must evidently be no less impossible to do so in the case of such as nominally accepted it, instead of (like the great majority of both Jews and Gentiles) utterly rejecting it. Another is, the consideration that a divine predestination and election is spoken of in scripture in relation to many other subjects besides the christian faith; as, for

example, to the death of Christ by the instrumentality of wicked men, (see Acts ii. 23, iv. 28, and 1 Peter, i. 19, 20,) and to the several callings of Josiah, Cyrus, Jeremiah, and Paul, (see 1 Kings xiii. 2, Isaiah xlv. 1-5, Jeremiah i. 5, and Gal. i. 15, 16.) Yet, no one imagines that it interfered with the freedom of will and action of any of the parties to whom it related.*

Next, it is objected that this doctrine naturally suggests ideas of fatalism, and tends to produce recklessness, by leading men to conclude that it is alike needless and useless for them to concern themselves about their eternal interests, since, if they are among the number of God's elect, they will certainly be saved, and, if they are not, as certainly be lost. A sufficient answer to this objection is supplied by the fact which we have just seen, that God's predestination and election of men in no way interferes with their freedom

* That the whole subject of man's freedom of will and action is beset with difficulties of a metaphysical nature, arising out of such considerations as the mutual relation of cause and effect, motive and act, the evil tendencies of man's own fallen nature, and the influences, both good and evil, that operate upon him from without, is most certain. But however great these difficulties may be, not only do they in no degree affect the reality of the thing itself, (a reality alike recognized in God's dealings with men, and in their own dealings with one another,) but they are also wholly independent of the doctrine of predestination and election, and would have been just the same had no such doctrine been heard of. The scripture plainly teaches that, when men reject or neglect the offer of salvation by Christ, it is emphatically their own act; and that, when they embrace it, their own faculties are exercised in co-operation with the secret working of God's Spirit in their souls. See Phil. ii. 12, 13. These two facts seem essentially to comprise all that we know or can know about the matter.

of will and action. But further, the objection as to fatalism equally applies to the divine foreknowledge; since it is certain that whatever God foresees will happen, must inevitably come to pass; and as to recklessness, just as we have seen that no one has any ground to account himself one of God's elect, except in so far as he has the true evidence of his being a child of God, so none can have reason to conclude that he is not such except in so far as he is conscious of refusing or neglecting God's offers of mercy in Christ.

Another objection is that this doctrine imputes to God partiality, if not absolute injustice, in his dealings with men. As to injustice, there can evidently be no place for such an idea if (as we have seen to be the case) men are lost by refusing, in the exercise of their freedom of choice, to accept the mercy that is offered to them. As to partiality, the word is ordinarily used in an evil sense, implying a difference in men's treatment of one another which is unjust or unreasonable; a sense therefore which can of course have no application to the ways of God. Yet, that he does deal diversely with men, for reasons which he has not explained to us, is not only a most certain fact, but one which pervades his whole providential and moral administration: and whatever difficulties it may involve, (difficulties, be it observed, wholly independent of the doctrine of predestination,) we can neither escape nor resolve them. Our only resource is to exercise trust in the perfect wisdom and righteousness of the Most High. Even the lower interpretation of the New Testament doctrine of election admits a most important difference in God's manner of dealing with men.

It is however urged that, although a difference of this kind which has relation only to man's present and temporary state of being, may be reconcileable with just ideas of the character and ways of God, one which involves his future and eternal condition is not. It might reasonably be replied to this objection that our knowledge and understanding of the counsels and ways of the Most High is far too imperfect to allow of our setting any such limit to the exercise of his will. But in truth the limit itself has, so far as our knowledge extends, no real existence; since the whole united testimony of scripture and experience shows that, in the divine economy, men's eternal blessedness, so far as the matter is opened to us by revelation, is closely if not inseparably connected with their temporal circumstances and spiritual opportunities. Thus, whatever may be the secret counsels of the Most High, it is certain that the scripture makes no mention of any way of salvation, since Christ's advent, except through faith in him; and this, as the Apostle expressly says in Rom. x. 14, and as the very nature of the case implies, is necessarily connected with the preaching and hearing of his gospel. As has been already observed, whatever difficulties the subject may involve, our only resource is to confide in the perfectly wise and righteous exercise of the Divine sovereignty; and this is just where the Apostle leaves it in concluding his argument about election. See Rom. ix. 19-24.

Again, it is objected to this doctrine that the predestination and election of a portion of mankind to eternal life involves, by logical necessity, that of the residue to eternal perdition. Now observe, first, that it must, in the nature of things, be wholly inadmissible to apply the principles

and rules of human logic to a subject so entirely beyond the reach of our knowledge and comprehension as the counsels and ways of God. (See e.g. Job xi. 7-9, and xxvi. 14.) Secondly, that the fallacy of the alleged logical inference becomes at once evident if we try it by the alternative interpretation of the doctrine. That interpretation admits that men are predestinated and chosen to the hearing and (in some sense or other) reception of the gospel. But would its advocates admit that this idea necessarily implies that God has also predestinated and chosen the residue of mankind—those who either have never heard the gospel message, or, having heard, have rejected it—to their ignorance or unbelief? Assuredly not. They would justly appeal to the uniform language of scripture as utterly opposed to any such idea, and as plainly indicating, not predestination, but simply permission. See e.g. Acts xiv. 16, and xvii. 30. But if the inference be thus found fallacious in the one case, on what principle can it be alleged in the other? Thirdly, its fallacy is further apparent from the consideration that, while the idea of a divine predestination to eternal life is in perfect harmony with the great scripture truth that man's salvation is wholly of God, that of one to endless perdition is utterly irreconcilable with a doctrine no less plainly declared in it, that their destruction is altogether of themselves.

But it is well known that this supposed logical inference is not only alleged by objectors to the doctrine of predestination and election as here interpreted, but has also, especially in former times, been strenuously asserted by many of its most earnest and able advocates. That very same idea of a divine predestination to persistent wicked-

ness and endless woe which the former urge as a fatal objection to this doctrine, has been adopted and taught by the latter as an integral and undoubted part of the truth of God.* Now considering that, while the doctrine (however it be interpreted) of a predestination to holiness and happiness is expressly and repeatedly taught in scripture, not even a hint of one to sin and misery is anywhere to be found in its pages, it might surely have been expected that christian men would have hesitated even mentally to make the latter an article of faith, on the mere ground of supposed logical inference; much more that they would have shrunk from the very thought of openly asserting and teaching, on such a ground, what the Holy Spirit had not commissioned the Apostles themselves to teach or even hint at. But if the course which they actually took may well seem astonishing even when viewed in this light, how much more does it become so when we consider that what they thus taught directly contradicts the express and repeated declarations which God has made to us in the holy scriptures concerning his mind and will towards the children of men, and of which such passages as Ezekiel xxxiii. 11, John iii. 16, 17, and 1 Timothy ii. 4, may be taken as representatives! No respect for names however deservedly honoured in the church on other accounts, should restrain those who

*This idea is often expressed by the term *reprobation*, used in contradistinction to *election*. Not only however has the idea itself no foundation whatever in the teaching of scripture, but such an application of the term is wholly at variance with scripture usage; a *reprobate* being, in its language, one whose wickedness or apostasy plainly shows that he is no child of God, nor any disciple of Christ. See e.g. 1 Cor. ix. 27 Greek, and Titus i. 16.

reverence God's truth from earnestly protesting against and condemning such a manner of dealing with it; while they may well rejoice in the thought that what they thus condemn belongs far more to the past history of the church than to its present circumstances and future prospects.

The last objection to be noted, and probably the most influential of any, is one nearly allied to that just spoken of; namely, that this doctrine is irreconcilable with those numerous passages of scripture which have been already referred to as plainly declaring God's aspect of love and mercy towards mankind at large. But is it really so? Apart from the question of predestination and election, the representation which the scriptures give of the general subject of men's salvation and perdition is (as we have already seen), that salvation by Christ is offered alike to all; that some do, and others do not accept it; and that, in so doing, both classes exercise that freedom of will and action which is the ground of man's accountability to God. There is clearly no difficulty here. If now we bring in the further idea that the former class were predestinated and chosen to the salvation which they thus obtain, does this in any way contravene or affect the position of the latter as here described? Surely not. It undoubtedly brings in a difficulty, but one which would equally arise out of the doctrine of salvation being by grace alone; namely, that of a seeming diversity in God's manner of dealing with the two classes. This is a difficulty which, as we have already seen, we can neither escape nor solve. But however great it may be, it cannot in any way disturb or invalidate the plain doctrine of scripture before noted, that, as truly as men's salvation is wholly of God, so truly is their destruction altogether of themselves.

Further, a very strong presumption that these two things are not in their nature irreconcilable, arises out of the fact that a multitude of Christ's true followers, including very many no less eminent for high mental endowments than for earnest piety, have, especially of later times, unhesitatingly accepted them both, as alike plainly taught in scripture, and therefore alike constituent parts of divine truth; however unable they may have found themselves either fully to perceive or clearly to demonstrate their harmony with one another.

And a further presumption of no little weight is suggested by the consideration that the admission of their reconcilableness seems to be the only way which opens any prospect of Christ's followers arriving at unity of judgment in relation to this greatly vexed subject. All past experience tends to show that, so long as the ideas in question are regarded as irreconcilable, some christians will embrace the one, and some the other, according as their different circumstances of education and association, or their characters of mind and habits of thinking, may dispose them. On the other hand, the great progress which the belief of their reconcilableness has of later times made in the church, seems to warrant our regarding the future attainment of such unity, to a very large extent, as not only possible, but even probable.

In the foregoing argument no allusion has been made to the case of *infants*, because the scripture doctrine of predestination and election makes none, either expressly or by implication. As we have seen, that doctrine relates specifically and exclusively to believers in Christ. That God's

manner of dealing with infants should have been dragged into the subject, can only be accounted for by the influence of that hurtful love of systematizing, long so prevalent in the church, which leads men, instead of being content thankfully to receive and profit by whatever God has been pleased to make known to them as his truth, to attempt to supply what he has not seen fit to disclose by their own inferences and conclusions. And that good men should have dared, on such grounds, to speak of God as predestinating infants to eternal perdition, may well be accounted one of its most lamentable, not to say horrible fruits. Happily, however, this also belongs rather to the past than to the present.

NOTE TO ESSAY III., p. 40.

The purpose of this Note is briefly to consider that interpretation of the New Testament doctrine of election which regards the election as national rather than personal, and as having immediate reference to the calling of the Gentiles.

As to the first point, though the word *national* is obviously appropriate when applied to the election of Israel from among all other nations to be in a certain sense God's peculiar people, it seems altogether inappropriate when applied to an election which has reference to all nations alike, and which, whatever estimate may be formed of its specific nature and scope, would seem plainly to be an election of certain persons from among those nations. See for example the Apostle's express language in Rom. ix. 24.

But two reasons are assigned in support of this view. First, that, as God's election of his people under the old covenant was a national one, there is a strong presumption that, under the new covenant, it would be the same. So far however from the circumstance of a particular theological word or term having a certain meaning in relation to the one economy, affording any presumption that it must have the same in relation to the other, the presumption, as inferred from scripture use and analogy, will be found much more the other way. Note for example the widely different import of the terms *people of God, Israel, sanctify, temple, priesthood, altar, sacrifice, &c.*, as used in relation to the two economies. In the one case, the ideas implied by these terms are predominantly outward material and temporal, while in the others they are no less characteristically inward spiritual and eternal; the difference between them exemplifying that general relation in which scripture represents these economies as standing one to another; the earlier and inferior shadowing forth the later and superior. Hence it might naturally be expected that God's election of his people under the latter would be, as the foregoing inquiry has led us to conclude it really is, of a higher kind, and embracing higher objects, than under the former. And besides the general presumption which arises out of this general difference between the two economies, there is a further special one afforded by that great characteristic of the latter, its "bringing life and immortality to light." This would naturally and strongly suggest what we have seen to be a prominent feature of the predestination and election spoken of in the New Testament, namely, that it is one to eternal life.

But, secondly, it is alleged that the Apostle's argument in Rom. ix. 6-24 distinctly implies that the character of God's election of men under the two economies is essentially the same. So far however is this from being the case that a close examination of the passage will be found to lead to a directly opposite conclusion. The Apostle does indeed begin his argument by alluding to the election of Abraham's posterity through Isaac and Jacob, and finishes it by referring to that of believers in Christ, without specifically noting any difference in their character. But to have done this would have been wholly foreign to his immediate object, which manifestly had no reference to the particular character of any kind of election, but was simply that of showing that the *principle* of election had ever been a declared and prominent feature of God's dealings with men. But though he does not directly notice any difference of character in the several instances of election to which he refers, his incidental allusion, in vv. 22, 23, to the future and eternal issues of the New Testament election, plainly indicates a most momentous difference between it and those of preceding dispensations. And that he did distinctly recognize a great diversity in the character of particular instances of the divine election, is further evident from his referring, in a subsequent part of the same epistle (ch. xi. 2-5), to an example, under the Old Testament economy, of an election of a personal and spiritual nature having place within that general and temporal election which comprehended the whole Jewish nation.

Let us now look at the second point before mentioned,—the alleged immediate reference of the predestination and

election spoken of in the New Testament to the calling of the Gentiles. While this does not seem at all to harmonize with the Apostle's express representation of that election in Rom. ix. 24, as including both Jews and Gentiles, still less can it be in any degree reconciled with those passages in which God's election of his people in Christ is spoken of with exclusive reference to the former. See Matt. xxiv. 22, 24, and Rom. xi. 1-7.

It has however been alleged that both the Apostle's argument about election in Rom. ix, and his thanksgiving to God in connexion with it in Eph. i. 3, have immediate reference to this subject. But neither part of this statement will be found in any degree sustained by a close examination of the two epistles. His first introduction of the subject of election into the former is in ch. viii. 28-30, where there is clearly nothing more than a general reference to the church of Christ. Nor is it till we come to ch. ix. 24 that we find him making any allusion to the calling of the Gentiles; and even then it is only in the incidental way of noting that the election of which he was speaking included Gentiles as well as Jews.

So also his thanksgiving to God in Eph. i. 3 manifestly refers to the church of Christ taken generally; and though he introduces the subject of predestination and election in the two following verses, it is not till we come to v. 10 that we find him making any allusion to the calling of the Gentiles; and then it is evidently only for the purpose of noticing the great christian truth that God's election of a peculiar people to himself was no longer, as it had been in former times, limited to one particular nation, but included men of all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews. This last

truth was unquestionably a subject of great rejoicing to the Apostle ; but the context plainly shows that here, as in 2 Thess. ii. 13, and 1 Peter i. 3, the emphatically great subject of apostolic joy and thanksgiving was the thought that God had chosen a people to himself to be partakers of those inestimable blessings, both present and future, which come to men through Jesus Christ.

ESSAY IV.

ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE REVELATION WHICH
GOD HAS MADE TO US IN SCRIPTURE CONCERNING HIS
DEALINGS WITH MANKIND IN THE WORLD TO COME.

As our knowledge of a future state of being is mainly drawn from the revelation made to us in the New Testament Scriptures, so it is almost wholly from them that we derive whatever knowledge we have of men's circumstances in that state.

Two successive stages of it are plainly indicated in their teaching ; one immediately following the death of the body, and commonly termed by theologians "the intermediate state," the other beginning with the resurrection and judgment of the last day. While, however, the former is almost never directly or formally spoken of, and is only rarely and briefly referred to even in an incidental way, the latter is constantly and largely dwelt on ; a manifest indication of the divine purpose that to it men's thoughts should be chiefly directed.

Scanty as is the information given to us concerning the first of these two stages of our future being, it plainly suggests the idea, not of any mixed or chequered state of things, like that with which we are conversant on earth, but of two altogether opposite and separate conditions of happiness and misery ; the one the portion of God's people, the other that of his enemies. The former of these is however both more often and more distinctly alluded to than the latter.

In the far more copious information afforded to us respecting the second stage of man's future existence, we find the idea just spoken of presented in the fullest and most distinct manner; though, as in the preceding case, its aspect towards the redeemed people of God is much more dwelt on than that towards his enemies. And further, while (as we have seen) the teaching of scripture justifies our regarding "the intermediate state" as largely anticipating the issues of the general judgment, it plainly suggests that the consummation of man's blessedness or misery is reserved for the final state of things which is to follow that judgment.

Such is the general import of what is revealed in the New Testament concerning men's circumstances in the unseen world. Let us now look at the question, how far this revelation does or does not relate to all mankind. It will be obvious from what we have already seen, that our means for answering this question must be almost wholly drawn from what is disclosed in scripture respecting the final judgment and its issues.

First then, all that is there said leads to the conclusion which would otherwise be inevitable from the very meaning of the word, that this judgment can have relation only to such of mankind as are morally accountable beings. If we except, on the one hand, the express negative declaration that "where no law is, there is no transgression," and consequently no punishment; and, on the other, whatever of positive is included in those few words of the Saviour from which his followers have, by common consent, drawn conclusions of comfort and hope in relation to the future state of such as die in infancy, there would seem to be no intimation given to us in scripture concerning God's manner

of dealing in the world to come with that very considerable though undefinable portion of our race which consists of individuals who, whether from the non-development, or from the loss or disorder of their mental and moral faculties, are, so far as we can judge, not accountable beings. Thus, at the outset of our inquiry, we see in the silence of scripture respecting this particular subject an indication of that great and pervading characteristic of all divine revelation which we shall hereafter have occasion more fully to notice, its essential limitation to such matters as they to whom it comes have need, in some way or other, to be made acquainted with.

The next conclusion to which an examination of the teaching of scripture respecting the final judgment leads us, is that, subject to the exception just referred to, it will include mankind at large. Besides many other passages which seem more or less plainly to imply this, (as Matt. xvi. 27, xxv. 32, John v. 28, 29, 2 Cor. v. 10, 11, 2 Tim. iv. 1, Rev. xx. 12, 13, and xxii. 12,) there are some which can hardly be deemed less than decisive as to this point. Such are, our Lord's words in Matthew xi. 22, 24, and xii. 41, 42, respecting Tyre, Sidon, Sodom, Nineveh, and the queen of Sheba; the Apostle Paul's in Acts xvii. 31, and xxiv. 15, 25, addressed to heathen hearers; and his express declaration in Rom. ii. 12-16, of the principles on which both Jews and Gentiles will be respectively judged.

While however the testimony of scripture is thus clear as regards the general truth that the final judgment will (subject to the above exception) include mankind at large, we find on further examination that by far the greater part of what is said therein respecting the judgment itself, and almost if not every passage which brings its issues distinctly

into view, have more or less immediate and special reference to persons either directly living under the Jewish and Christian economies, or in some way brought into contact with God's revealed truth. It is needless for our present purpose to adduce evidence of the first part of this statement. As to the second, if we consider to whom the following passages were addressed, and other circumstances pertaining to them, their evidence of its truth will hardly admit of question: Matt. iii. 10, 12, vii. 21-27, viii. 11, 12, x. 32, 33, xiii. 40-43, 49, 50, xxii. 13, xxv. 14-30, Mark ix. 43-48, xvi. 16, Luke xvi. 19-31, 2 Thess. i. 6-9, Heb. x. 26, 27, Rev. vii. 9-17, xiv. 9-11, xxi. and xxii.

There are undoubtedly a few other passages in which the issues of the general judgment are more or less definitely spoken of, the scope of which may at first sight seem to be wider; yet it may be questioned whether any one of them will be found on examination to furnish a clear exception to the above statement. Thus our Lord's uniform application in other places of the term *brethren* to his disciples, would seem to show that his words in Matthew xxv. 34, 41 and 46 must immediately refer to persons who had at least been brought into contact with his truth. Again, as regards the Apostle's language in Rom. ii. 6-11, it seems evident from what goes before in ch. i. that, so far as it applies to the Gentiles, its immediate reference is, not to persons living in the thick darkness of inherited heathenism and idolatry, but to such as had sinned against and departed from the knowledge of God and his truth. So also as to the description of the last judgment and its issues in Rev. xx. 11-15, considering that the contents of this book almost wholly relate to the then future history of

Christ's professing church, it seems reasonable to regard what is said there and in ch. xx. 8 respecting the doom of the ungodly, as specially referring to persons who have either professed or had access to his truth.

Our examination of the testimony of scripture has thus brought us to the conclusion that, while its general revelation of a final judgment has reference to mankind at large, almost if not all its more specific disclosures of the circumstances and issues of that judgment immediately or specially refer to that portion of our race which, under successive dispensations, has had more or less access to the knowledge of God and his truth. Now this conclusion will be found perfectly to harmonize with certain other prominent features of the revelation which God has made to us in the Holy Scriptures.

First, then, we see in it an exemplification of the great principle already alluded to, that all divine revelation is essentially limited to matters which in some way or other concern those to whom it comes. The more full and specific disclosure of the character and issues of the final judgment was needful to bring their own future prospects distinctly into view; while the general intimation of its extension to mankind at large was no less needful to give them a strong additional motive for obeying their divine Master's command to publish his gospel among their dark and ignorant fellow men. We shall presently have occasion more fully to notice both these points.

Next, the second part of the above conclusion is no less in harmony with the fact that the contents of the sacred volume almost exclusively relate to that portion of the human race which has more or less enjoyed the light of

divine truth. Thus, while the scriptures of the Old Testament relate almost wholly, either to persons who in early times had a knowledge of the one true God and his laws, or to the chosen posterity of Abraham, or to the future church of Christ, making for the most part only brief and incidental reference to the nations with which the chosen people came directly into contact, and hardly alluding to the vast residue of the human family, those of the New Testament no less predominantly refer, either to Christ's professing church, or to the nations brought into contact with it, scarcely making any allusion to those countless millions of our race which, from the commencement of the christian era down to the present time, have remained in entire ignorance of Christ and his truth.

Again, the second part of the conclusion is in equally close agreement with the manner in which the salvation and condemnation of men, both present and future, are constantly set before us in scripture. Thus the former is everywhere so closely associated, either expressly or by manifest implication, with the knowledge of God and his truth under successive dispensations, that it may well be questioned whether there is a single passage which distinctly points either to the present spiritual renovation of men, or to their future salvation, apart from the possession of such knowledge. If God has indeed made any provision for the renewal of our fallen nature, and for men's consequent admission to eternal blessedness in his own presence, independently thereof, he certainly has not seen good to reveal it to us.* Then, as to the subject of condemnation, though

* The Evangelist's words (John i. 9,) that Christ "was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," may

it is most certain that the whole teaching of scripture (see especially the Apostle's argument in Rom. i., ii., iii.) represents men as brought under condemnation, and as justly objects of divine wrath and punishment, simply on the ground of their transgression of God's law, (whatever may be the nature and extent of their knowledge of its requirements,) it is no less certain that all the most awful threatenings of scripture, every part of its revelation that brings the judgment and wrath of God most distinctly into view, point either expressly or by manifest implication to something more than transgression, even to the refusal of offered mercy. So pervading indeed is this feature of divine revelation that it may be questioned (as in the preceding case) whether a clear exception to it can be found throughout the sacred volume: and considering how prominent and essential a place the provision of mercy through Christ holds throughout the whole revelation of God's future judicial dealings with men, it seems hardly conceivable that there should be any such. Now if the refusal of mercy be

seem to contradict this statement. But observe, first, that the constant *usus loquendi* of John's Gospel indicates the real meaning of the passage to be "The true light, (that which lighteth every man,) coming into the world, was in the world." Second, that the *usus loquendi* of the New Testament generally shows that the word *lighteth* implies the actual reception of light, or the being really illuminated by it. Hence the true meaning of the passage appears clearly to be, That every one who is spiritually enlightened, is enlightened by Christ, and by none other. And this interpretation perfectly agrees with the immediate context, the scope of which manifestly is to contrast our Lord, as the only source of heavenly and saving light, with his forerunner and witness John the Baptist. See v. 8.

thus one great element of men's future condemnation and punishment, whatever revelation God has made to us concerning the latter subject must needs mainly refer to such as have some knowledge of himself and his truth, since (as we have already seen), whatever may be his secret counsels and ways, he has certainly revealed nothing to us respecting the extension of mercy and forgiveness except in connexion with such knowledge.

Having thus seen how entirely the conclusion to which our inquiry has brought us harmonizes with other characteristic features of divine revelation, let us next look at that conclusion in its practical aspect.

And first, nothing can be more certain than that, whether we are contemplating for our own profit what God has been pleased to make known to us respecting his dealings with men in the world to come, or are speaking of it to our fellow-men, we are called upon to dwell on his judgments as well as on his mercies; and that it is the solemn duty of Christ's ministers to follow his own example and that of his apostles in using all holy faithfulness and plainness of speech in setting forth the terrors of his wrath against those who reject the offers of his mercy. He who perfectly "knew what was in man," saw fit, in his teaching, no less to appeal to men's fears than to their hopes. Shall we then dare to act as if we were wiser than he, or delude ourselves and others with the vain idea that what was then needful is not so now?

Next, it is no less manifestly the duty of christian ministers, while ever keeping in view the solemn and uncompromising truth that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," to follow the example of

Christ and his apostles in specially connecting the terrors of the world to come with the contempt and violation of God's moral law. Our estimate of men's inward character is greatly liable to mistake, but of their outward conduct we can for the most part rightly judge; and it may well be questioned whether, in the ordinary teaching of the present day, those plain declarations of God's truth in relation to this particular subject, which so abound in the New Testament, (see e.g. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, and Rev. xxi. 8,) have their rightful place.

And there is another matter pertaining to our practical dealing with the general subject of God's future judgment, which, though pointing in a different direction from the preceding one, is well deserving of notice. Whether the concluding verses of Mark's Gospel are or are not genuine, there can be no question that the language ascribed to our Lord in verse 16, truly represents the general teaching of the New Testament. In our practical application of its first part, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," that belief which is "in the heart," living faith, is of course to be understood. As regards the second, "He that believeth not shall be damned (condemned)," these three things are evidently to be borne in mind. First, that it is not in our power to define precisely, however we may be able to do so approximately, what truths are necessarily included in the idea of believing in Christ. Second, that neither can we define what constitutes such a presentation of his truth as is needful to bring any one within the scope of these awful words. Thirdly, that however competent we may be to judge of the extent of any one's unbelief, we are for the most part very imperfectly able to

judge of the state of the heart which such unbelief indicates, or with which it is connected. Yet the whole teaching of scripture assures us that this will emphatically constitute the ground of God's judgment of men. So far as unbelief arises from such causes as those spoken of in John iii. 19, 20, and v. 39, 40, the application of the above words is plain; but as regards other obstacles to men's reception of Christ's truth, either in whole or in part, such as education, association, habit, and the like, God alone can truly estimate their influence; and all that he has made known to us concerning his character and ways leads us certainly to conclude that he will make a just allowance for it.

Let us now turn to the practical aspect of our conclusion in its relation to those who are wholly ignorant of God and his revealed truth. The consideration that the general judgment will in some way or other include mankind at large, must necessarily (as we have already seen) furnish a strong motive for making known to them the Gospel of Christ; and such the great Apostle of the Gentiles evidently felt it to be. See e.g. his language in Acts xvii. 30, 31, xxiv. 25, and 2 Cor. v. 10, 11. Yet it can hardly be said that this motive is very prominently insisted on in scripture; while the other part of the conclusion shows that, in appealing to it, we are not justified in insisting on those passages which most distinctly and awfully bring into view the terrors of the world to come. And least of all must we ever lose sight of the great principle on which our Lord himself has so expressly told us that the judgment of the last day will proceed. See Luke xii. 47, 48.

One more point in the practical aspect of our conclusion yet remains to be noted. If the revelation which God has

made to us in scripture respecting his dealings with men in the world to come be so greatly limited as we have found it to be, there must of course be a proportionate call upon us to exercise patient and humble trust in him as regards that which he has not seen fit to disclose. And besides the consideration of the honour which all such exercise gives to God, and of the spiritual profit which it must necessarily bring to ourselves, there are two other thoughts which may help us trustfully and peacefully to acquiesce in our want of further knowledge. One, that (as we just now saw) the great Judge himself has distinctly made known to us the fundamental principle of perfect equity by which his final judgment of men will be governed. The other, that if we are to a large extent left in the dark respecting God's judicial dealings with men in the world to come, we are no less so in regard to his present providential appointments and general moral administration. If the former include mysteries which we cannot penetrate, so also do the latter. Such for example are those involved in what the Apostle says in Acts xiv. 16, and xvii. 80, about God's manner of dealing with the idolatrous heathen world prior to our Lord's coming on earth; and in the fact that, although more than 1800 years have now passed since Christ gave commandment that his gospel should be published to all nations, a vast portion of the human race still remains wholly ignorant of it.

Though the desire to know more than the Most High has been pleased to disclose to us respecting his dealings with our fellow men in the world to come is not in itself sinful, it will assuredly become a dangerous snare to ourselves and others if it leads us, however unconsciously, to

add to his truth, or to attempt to fill up by our own conjectures and inferences the blanks which he has seen fit to leave in his revelation. There are many earnest and devout men who seem to think that, besides what the scriptures plainly disclose respecting this subject, there are passages in them which hint, though obscurely, at further truths, which thus become legitimate subjects of inquiry. Such an idea appears to me wholly at variance with the general character and purpose of the sacred volume; nor can I see any ground for it in any of the passages which have been appealed to.*

In the preceding inquiry the question of the *duration* of the issues of the last judgment has been purposely kept out of sight. Let us now look a little at it. Observe then, First, that, while the language used by our Lord and his apostles in numerous places is such as plainly to imply the finality and perpetuity of those issues, it may be safely affirmed that throughout the sacred volume not even a hint is anywhere given of any provision made by God for either changing the moral and spiritual character of men after death,†, or in any way altering their condition after the decisions of the last judgment shall have been carried into effect.

Second, that, although the terms expressing duration which are ordinarily applied to this subject in scripture do not in themselves necessarily denote duration without end, they do unquestionably very often denote it, as when they

* See Note A at the end of this Essay.

† See Note B at the end of this Essay.

are applied to the being of God; and that, although they are frequently applied in the Old Testament Scriptures to earthly subjects, they are scarcely ever so applied in the New, after the revelation of the world to come had been fully made.*

Third, that, while these terms are often applied in their more simple form to the future condition of both the righteous and the wicked, the only passage in which they are applied in their compound form (one evidently designed to give peculiar emphasis to their meaning) to men's state in the world to come, relates exclusively to the latter. See Rev. xiv. 10, 11.

Fourth, that our Lord's language in Mark ix. 43-48 respecting the future doom of the ungodly, no less plainly, though in different terms, expresses the idea of endless duration.

Fifth, that if the Scriptures do not really teach the finality and perpetuity of all the issues of the last judgment, it seems impossible to escape the conclusion that their language is fitted rather to mislead than to guide men in relation to divine truth.

Sixth, that while the finality and perpetuity of those issues in regard to the wicked cannot be questioned as a matter of scripture interpretation, man's utter incompetence to comprehend and judge of the ways of God altogether forbids his objecting to it on any antecedent grounds.

Seventh, that if the plain meaning of scripture is set aside on such grounds, its authority is virtually annulled,

* Matt. xxi. 19 seems to be the only clear example; and there the idea of perpetuity in its most absolute sense is necessarily involved.

and man becomes in effect, not the mere recipient of God's revealed truth, but the judge of what that truth ought to be.

NOTE A. TO ESSAY IV. p. 79.

I have thought it well to introduce here a brief notice of the principal of these passages.

Acts iii. 21. *Until the times of restitution of all things.* As the immediately preceding words plainly show that these refer to our Lord's second coming, it is evident that they cannot possibly point to any universal restoration of mankind to holiness and happiness, since (as we have seen in this Essay) the constant teaching of scripture shows that that coming will have a far different issue. See e.g. *Matt.* xvi. 27, and xxv. 46. Indeed the same Apostle's language elsewhere is utterly opposed to any such idea. See *2 Peter* iii. 7. The near connexion in which the above words stand with his allusion to those "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" which would be consequent on his hearers' repentance conversion and forgiveness, seems plainly to show that they must refer to that consummation of blessedness and glory which the future advent of the Lord Jesus will bring to his believing people.

Rom. viii. 22. *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.* While the *usus loquendi* of scripture fully justifies our understanding the Greek words here rendered *the whole creation* as really meaning *every human being* (cf. *Mark* xvi. 15, and

Col. i. 23, Greek), both the immediate context and the course of the apostle's argument plainly demand this interpretation. But even were it otherwise, neither this verse nor any part of the connected passage would afford the smallest countenance to any other idea of future restoration than that which is so expressly and repeatedly indicated by the terms of the latter, the consummated blessedness and glory of God's redeemed people in the world to come. See vv. 17, 18, 19, 21, and 23.

1 Cor. xv. 22. *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* If this passage be detached from its context, and interpreted without reference to the great argument of which it forms part, it may unquestionably be made to teach the resurrection unto life eternal of the whole human race; just as the same apostle's language in Rom. v. 18, if treated in the same way, is made to assert that all mankind are savingly justified through Christ. In each case the whole course of the argument and the immediate context combine to show that the word *all* in the second clause relates solely to Christ's believing people.

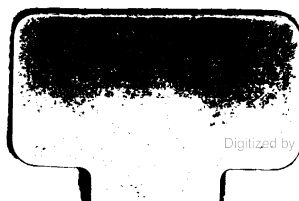
2 Peter iii. 13. *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth.* There seems to be a somewhat prevalent idea in the church that the apostle means by these words that the new heavens and earth of which he here speaks are to be a renovation of those now existing ones the destruction of which by fire he had just before been predicting. While however it is evident that the words themselves necessarily imply no such meaning, the apostle's language in vv. 10, 11, rather suggests the idea of an entire dissolution and disappearance of the latter: and this would seem to be the obvious teaching of

other passages, as Matt. xxiv. 35, Heb. i. 11, 12, Rev. xx. 11, and xxi. 1. Judging from the use of the expression *new heavens and new earth* in the last mentioned passages, as well as in Isaiah lrv. 17, and lxvi. 22, it would seem here simply to denote the provision of a new and eternal abode for God's redeemed people; the same with that blessed inheritance prepared for them in the unseen world which is so often spoken of in scripture, though under various modes of expression. See e.g. Matt. viii. 11, xxv. 34, and John xiv. 3.—The question of the exact meaning of the expression of which we have been here speaking, would seem of too little practical moment to demand notice, were it not that the idea of a predicted renovation of the existing heavens and earth seems to be vaguely associated in many minds with that of a general reparation of the mischief which sin has wrought in God's creation being necessary to the consummation of Christ's work and of the Father's glory in him. The scriptures assuredly give no countenance to such an idea, and it needs but little reflexion to perceive how far its admission must of necessity carry us.

NOTE B. TO ESSAY IV. p. 79.

The apostle Peter's statement (1 Peter iii. 19), that Christ, by his Spirit, "went and preached unto the spirits in prison," is interpreted by some commentators as meaning that our Lord, during his abode in Hades, preached to the there imprisoned spirits of the ungodly antediluvians. Two

considerations seem however decisively to show that the apostle must be here referring to the appeals which Christ made to those men while they were on earth, by his Spirit, and through Noah. Cf. Gen. vi. 3, 1 Peter i. 11, and 2 Peter ii. 5. 1. That no hint is anywhere else given in scripture of either our Lord or any other messenger from God preaching repentance and offering mercy to the spirits of wicked men in the invisible world. 2. That such an interpretation of the apostle's words is quite foreign to the scope of the whole passage, which plainly is to point out the analogy between what had happened in the days of Noah, and what was then taking place; namely, the salvation of believers, and the destruction of unbelievers. As the apostle's use of the words *in prison* must, on any view of his meaning, have had reference to the circumstances of the ungodly antediluvians at the time when he wrote, it was natural for him to speak of them in language proper to their then condition of *spirits*. (Cf. the use of this word in 1 John iv. 1-3.)



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